



US Forest Service Aviation Information Bulletin



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Page 1 of 1

Subject: Latitude/Longitude Information for GPS Navigation

Area of Concern: All Aviation Users

Distribution: All Aviation Users

Discussion: During a fire initial attack response a pilot entered latitude/longitude coordinates into the aircraft GPS system using the coordinates transmitted via radio by the Interagency Coordination Center. Upon arrival at the geographic location depicted by the GPS, the crew found no evidence of the reported fire. However, they had located a smoke in the distance and responded to that location. Further investigation showed that the discrepancy was caused by the pilot's use of lat/long coordinates in degrees and minutes when the aircraft GPS was configured to use degrees and tenths.

Forest Service direction found in the Mobilization Guide, National aircraft contracts, and the Interagency Airspace Guide for use of geographic coordinates are in conflict.

The 2010 Interagency Mobilization Guide establishes the common standard for lat/long readout in Chapter 20, line 3, on page 31. "Latitude and longitude must be provided in degrees and minutes". This is due to the format designed into the ROSS system used universally across the agencies dispatch centers.

National contracts- section C-8 b avionics states: The GPS shall utilize WGS-84 datum (and) reference latitude and longitude coordinates in the DM (degrees/minutes/decimal minutes) mode.

The Interagency Airspace Guide states in Chapter 5 page 521; the FAA Notam Office only accepts lat/long in degrees, minutes, seconds.

Recommendation: Regions should remind all pilots that lat/long coordinates may be communicated to them in several formats. It is the pilot's responsibility to confirm whether coordinates contain degrees, minutes, seconds or degrees, minutes and tenths and to assure that they are using information that matches their aircraft GPS navigation setting.

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